



AFFILIATION QUEBEC

*A NEW political party to refocus the agenda! "We don't want to be 'LIED TO', nor to be undervalued again."
-Allen E. Nutik, Party Leader*

De-merger question should be revisited NOW!

Bumbling Premier Jean Charest has again succeeded to satisfy no-one with the Governments proposed deck chair shuffling of the problem ridden Agglomeration Council, and the "open" chequebook donation to the fiscally incompetent Tremblay administration.

Quebec's minority Government status could give rise to a unique opportunity to correct one of Premier Jean Charest's failed promises in de-merging the forced municipal mergers, which were forcefully rammed through by the previous Parti Quebecois Government.

Given the rigorous conditions imposed for municipal de-mergers by the Charest Government, which resulted in almost guaranteed failure to secure adequate votes for a successful secession from Montreal by many of the previously independent cities, it is easy to understand some of the considerable repressed anger that still remains towards the Liberals.

Worse, even if the anticipated changes to Montreal's much maligned Agglomeration Council are implemented, the highly unpopular and autocratic Mayor Tremblay of Montreal will persist in retaining his classical, undemocratic stranglehold over the de-merged communities.

These untangled cities have been clearly prejudiced by the monstrous demon of Charest's making, notwithstanding the largely unheeded pleas of the suburban mayors.

In order to restore fair taxing and reasonable distribution of island-wide shared and common services like police, fire, public transport, sewage, etc, the Quebec Government should now permit equitable de-merger of interested island municipalities and boroughs, until at least 51% of the population of Montreal has been decentralized from the mega-city.

The concept of "one island, one snowplough" does NOT work, and many of Montreal's boroughs have seen a steady decline of services to citizens, with a simultaneous increase of costs to ratepayers.

Moreover, the de-merged municipalities have been unjustly dealt with by the inept Tremblay administration, which has been uncannily successful at angering a significant portion of its citizens, commercial taxpayers, and unionized employees, all at once.

The Liberal party is feeling severely embattled because of low voter satisfaction, especially among Anglo and ethnic communities, the siege mentality of leading a minority government, and the creation of AffiliationQuebec as a new political party to refocus the agenda in areas where the Liberals have been noticeably weak in representation and performance.

With nationalist Mario Dumont and his Action Democratique du Quebec party anxious to make headway in west-end constituencies where it has been previously shut out, the time may be ripe for leaders in failed de-merged cities and cohesive boroughs with large numbers of home owners, to press, anew, their demands for a new, more equitable, de-merger process.

After all, if there can be repeated referendums seeking independence for Quebec, there is no logical reason a second de-merger referendum for separation from Montreal cannot be undertaken, especially under a normal voting pattern of 50% plus one, of total ballots cast.

This is a vulnerable time for political parties jockeying for Anglo and ethnic votes, with a new Quebec provincial election sure to be forced on us within a year.

Winds of political change, if strong enough, can bring sharp changes in policies; but the message must absolutely be loud, forceful, and united. Mayors and councillors in already de-merged communities could be instrumental in trumpeting the values of improved quality of life for citizens in smaller, de-merged communities.

Only when the power of the failed mega-city of Montreal has been blunted, unproductive and sure to be striking labour unions reigned in, and democratic and representative structures restored to the City of Montreal (too many city councillors), will the concept of true democracy return to a citizenry hungry for reform.

Allen E. Nutik is leader of AffiliationQuebec a newly formed, Quebec political party focused on minority rights.

**The Montreal Gazette REFUSED to publish this op-ed article.

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